

DRAFT MINUTES – December 11, 2007

The meeting was called to order by President Barbara Falcigno. The November 2007 minutes were approved with no additions or corrections. The agenda was accepted with 2 additions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Jessica Jones, a representative from the Board of Elections (BOE), noted that the County still needs election judges. Montgomery County employees that serve as election judges get administrative leave plus the stipend for the day(s) they work plus their training. The BOE has also created a new position this year called a closing position. They want to hire people for this new position at each polling place. The people will work from 6:00 – 8:00 pm and then will help shut down the machines and return the necessary materials to the Board of Elections instead of the chief or assistant chief judges as in the past. For more information or to download an application, visit their website at www.777vote.org.
- Arnie Gordon asked for support of 3 pieces of legislation that Civic Federation is supporting. Two are County Council bills: Bill 37-07 that provides a method for waiving fees for civic and homeowner associations to put signs up at the entrances to their developments; and the proposed Forest Conservation Law Marc Elrich introduced to protect the tree canopy in the County by clarifying what trees can be cut down without a permit. The third is State bill 803-08 which will allow Montgomery County to set its own rules for campaign financing for its own offices.
- Sharon Dooley noted that she had attended a form-based planning training session and showed some examples of what has been done in some other areas, noting that this approach is more useful in more urban areas.
- Bob Beard noted that GOCA membership renewal forms were available on the table near the door and that there will be a performance on December 14th of Scrooge at Rockville's Firtzgerald Theater as a benefit for PROJECT CHANGE. People can either use the tickets which are \$15 themselves or can donate them for use by children at the Children's Inn at NIH, Aunt Hattie's Place, and one other group.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Draft Illustrative Concept Plan & Development Guidelines for the Olney Town Center – Barbara Falcigno noted that our community is on the verge of something exciting. We have gone through the Master Plan process and changed a lot of the zones in the town center area and put all the permitted uses from those zones in the newly created Mixed Use Town Center (MXTC) Zone. GOCA advocated for a long-term committee to oversee the redevelopment of the town center. We recognized that this redevelopment would happen at different times and felt it was important that there be a cohesive plan with a greater vision for the whole town center, so development does not take place piecemeal. The County Council established the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC) when it approved the current master plan and put it under the auspices of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). M-NCPPC approved the OTCAC membership in May 2006. She then introduced Jim Smith, the OTCAC Chair to present the *Illustrative Concept Plan and Development Guidelines*.

Jim began by noting that the purpose of the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee is to create an Illustrative Concept Plan for the town center; create a concept plan for a civic center/town commons; and review development proposals for parcels within the town center and make recommendations to Montgomery County Planning Board. The members of the OTCAC represent a cross section of the community. Khalid Afzal outlined the Olney Master Plan review process that led to the adoption of the current plan in April 2005. The goals of the Master Plan are to create an economically healthy, attractive, pedestrian-oriented, and well connected Town Center to be the commercial and civic heart of the community, and create a civic center in the Town Center through redevelopment of a major shopping center or a public-private partnership. The Plan includes a vision of Olney Town Center as a focal point of the community that preserves Olney's semi-rural character by encouraging density and development in the Town Center and discouraging commercial development outside of the Town Center and allows for changes that will inevitably come as the economy grows. The section of the Plan relating to the town center area contains 23 recommendations including: creating a civic center and major public open space; a variety of measures to improve pedestrian circulation and safety; creating more street connections (e.g. N High to Morningwood and Third Ave to Hwy 108.); limiting building heights to 70'

in core and 42' to 56' at edge; setbacks above 2nd story on narrow streets; front building facades up to sidewalks; creating a "main street" effect on Freeman property with multiple connections to existing streets; landscaping wider sidewalks, amenities in public spaces, and visual breaks in larger parking lots; and environmental features including stormwater management, protect streams, forest conservation.

Jim noted that the Illustrative Concept Plan is a general picture of what the town center could look like if most areas redeveloped following master plan recommendations and illustrates some opportunities for land owners. He emphasized that it is NOT a development blueprint. Bill Caldwell, an architect with RTKL, Inc who took the lead on the work they did in helping the OTCAC put together the illustrative plan and development guidelines described the vision for each quadrant and outlined the aspects of the development guidelines.

SW Quadrant

- Explore potential for consolidating Library/shopping center parcel to facilitate development of signature Public building at gateway.
- Mixed-use development on remaining blocks
- Consider eventuality of relocating existing light industrial uses.

SW Quadrant

- Existing conditions vs. full development yield of approximately 2 acre minimum (at 20 units per acre equals 40 units residential.)
- Density requires structured parking of 2-3 levels.
- Commercial development: 3+ stories.
- Office above retail.

SE Quadrant

- Orient commercial development along Georgia Avenue and 108 w/ residential development
- Transitioning to neighborhoods.
- Explore mixed-use grocery store model.
- Create more vehicular/pedestrian connections.
- Small public open space.

NE Quadrant

- Option 1: Internal public space to become the heart of downtown.
- Strengthen pedestrian crossings across Route 108.
- Public space on Route 108 creates a "window" making the public space more visible.
- Strengthen pedestrian crossings across Route 108.
- Shows upper center redeveloped.

Development Guidelines

Part II of document

- Provides guidelines for architectural design, street design, parking lots and garages, landscape, and signage for use by developers and government.
- Establishes the standards that should be achieved through development.

Development Guidelines

- Jim noted that the OTCAC has been able to take advantage of work done by local architect Miche Booz for the Freeman Companies including a history and analysis of local building traditions in the greater Olney area and a catalog, analysis, and critique on local villages, towns, and mixed-use centers in the region. And, he thanked Bill Caldwell, the principal architect and Laura Rydland, an urban designer with RTKL, Inc. He also noted that the OTCAC is very interested in receiving community input, noted that feedback forms were available at this meeting and on the Committee's website at www.olneytowncenter.org or comments can be sent to him at James.Smith@olneytowncenter.org, or they can be sent to the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee PO Box 1164, Olney, MD 20830.

The following are some of the points made during the question and answer period following the presentation:

- There are not likely to be any department store type stores. Stores over 40,000 sq. ft would have to go through a different review process. There are controls in the zoning ordinance to constrain the size of retail uses.
- The zone calls for 42' building height on the Olney Elementary site to be consistent with the rest of the area. But, the school will remain a school as long as the school system wants it to be a school. If the site is ever redeveloped, they will look at the adjacent properties in deciding on building heights.

- The Committee does not know what any particular land owner might do. This plan is just to show what some of the possibilities are.
- RTKL usually works for developers, so they enjoyed working for a community for a change. Some of the other town center areas they have worked on are Silver Spring and Reston Town Center; and they specialize in this type of development. Bill felt that we had a good master plan which should lead to a higher quality of life in Olney and to higher property values. Often they work in areas with no plan which can lead to chaos. Bill also reiterated that this is just an illustrative plan and probably represents 50 years of development and will generally require the assembly of land to take greatest advantage of the zone. People should not be concerned if drawings of building go over property lines because this is just an illustration.
- Three-five story buildings from the core to the edge for the zone is a nice scale. Frederick would be a good model for this development. The residential scale of development in the town center is townhouse and garden apartment density and the commercial development is at FAR 1. This will generally mean using parking structures, so designs will need to mitigate the parking structures to make sure the parking integrates with buildings and streets.
- The NW quadrant will be the most difficult to redevelop. It will lend itself to live-work situations which means structures on a townhouse scale in which people live above their businesses.
- A circular arrangement at the Rte. 97/108 intersection would give a visual cue that you are at the center of town. It is important to physically mark the town center area so people driving through know where it begins and where it ends.
- In the SW quadrant, Bill anticipates that there will be a lot of assemblages.
- As the town center is developed, the community needs to think about where existing businesses we want to stay can go as land is developed.
- There are lots of urban models for grocery stores. In the SE quadrant, they are showing the grocery store where the gas station is located now. But, it is difficult to relocate gas stations; so it may take a long time for this to be worked out.
- Bill noted that there had been a brief discussion about the fact that the Olney House could be relocated and given a more civic presence. It could continue to be used as a restaurant as now or used some other way. The Committee was not promoting this idea, it was just a possibility that was discussed.
- The zone calls for 20% open or public space if the optional method of development is used, so each quadrant should end up with some open space area.
- The NE quadrant is largely the Freeman property. We know that the upper shopping center was redeveloped recently. So whatever changes the Freeman Co. decides on will be done to the lower shopping center first, with the upper center being changed later. There are several opportunities for good-size open space areas – on Rte. 108 which would give it good visibility or in a more central area. The Committee has not seen any Freeman plans, so these are just suggestions.
- The development guidelines reinforce the guidance in the Master Plan. They address such issues as architecture, streets, streetscapes, parking lots, signage, and a review process for development proposals.
- The Committee has interacted with the Freeman Company. They have a membership on the Committee and shared their knowledge of development with the group. They have also shared the work done for them by Miche Booz.
- It was suggested that the open space area be developed similarly to that done in the Reston Center with a skating rink over grass, so that the open space can be used all-year round.
- Ultimately the Planning Board will make decisions on site plans for development proposals, but the Planning Board has agreed that representatives from the OTCAC will sit at the table with the developers for development proposals for the town center area. Developers will also be required to present to the OTCAC before going before the Planning Board.
- Debie Klein, owner of the Backyard Naturalist, noted that it is difficult to relocate a business. The concern is how do you support yourself while the property your business is located in is being redeveloped. The role of the OTCAC is primarily related to looking at development plans, but they will consider creating a subcommittee that will look into ways to assist business owners who are being relocated.
- Timing for redevelopment is a function of economics. The redevelopment of the Olney Village and Olney Town Shopping Centers will likely drive the rest of the redevelopment of the town center area and should give it a good impetus.
- Karen Rollings described her efforts to assemble properties that run between N. High St and Morningwood Dr. She has not been able to assemble as many as she had hoped, but she is at a point that she must move ahead with her redevelopment plans for the properties she has assembled.

OFFICERS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report – Roy Peck reported that the current balance is \$6,300.00.

Correspondence Report – Nothing to report beyond what was mentioned during Pubic Comments.

Olney Chamber of Commerce Report – No report.

Civic Federation Report– Arnie Gordon noted that they had received a presentation on the Forest Conservation legislation introduced to the County Council by Councilmember Marc Elrich. As mentioned earlier, the legislation relates to controls over the removal of trees over a certain caliber.

Membership Committee – Bob Beard thanked those civic and homeowners associations that had maintained their memberships in 2007 and had donated \$1,450 towards the costs of this year's Olney Days.

President's Report – Barbara Falcigno noted that GOCA still needs to provide a representative to serve as a liaison to the Good Counsel High School Review Committee. They meet 4 times a year to oversee issues such as the viability of their traffic mitigation plan, parking issues impacting abutting properties, etc. The next meeting is January 8th at the school at 11:00 am. Also, Montgomery General Hospital will be coming to a future meeting soon. Barbara has asked them to meet with abutting property owners before coming to GOCA so that we can hear their concerns or reaction at our meeting.

There will be a presentation on development plans for the Hyde property adjacent to Good Counsel High School on Dec 13th at the Olney Theatre at 7:00 pm. And, there will be a hearing before the Planning Board on the Sunrise Senior Living proposal on January 14th.

Barbara thanked those who brought food for Manna.

OLD BUSINESS

2008 GOCA Officers Nominations – Barbara Falcigno noted that a slate of GOCA officers for 2008 will be presented at the January meeting. The election of the new officers would take place in February for a term that goes from February – January. She invited anyone interested in taking on an office or who know someone interested to contact her.

2007 GOCA Awards Nominations – Ron Berger noted that we are looking for nominations for the 2007 Annual GOCA Awards. Awards will be presented in a variety of categories: Howard J. Garber Memorial to the Citizen of the Year, Contribution to Community, Olney Heritage, and GOCA Worker of the Year on the first Sunday in March at Longwood Recreation Center. Nomination forms can be downloaded from the GOCA website.

ICC Interim Road to Rte. 28 – Barbara noted that a motion had been passed at the last meeting opposing the interim road presented by the ICC engineers, asking that Phase A not be opened until Phase B is complete, or that the ICC be extended to Rte. 28. Following that meeting, she, Roy Peck, and Arnie Gordon met with SHA who explained (1) why they cannot build that large a segment of the road and not open it, and (2) clarified some of the reasons they could not extend the road directly to Rte. 28. Also, the improvements at Rte. 97/28 will only keep the service of level from getting any worse. Westbound traffic coming across the interim road will not be able to go into Thistlebridge, so should not impact the Preserve at Small's Nursery.

Barbara asked if there was any interest in reconsidering the resolution from the previous meeting since it appears doubtful that SHA will accept any of the alternatives proposed. It was suggested that our elected officials should work together to oppose opening Phase A until Phase B is completed. Del. Karen Montgomery noted that it had taken a lot of work by the two local delegations to get approval for the underpass at Rte. 28. However, there is a schism now in their positions regarding this issue, so they will not be as helpful. She suggested that GOCA should move forward with the resolution. She felt we will be living with this for a long time and it may take approaching total gridlock to get sufficient pressure to get funding for the Rte. 97/28 intersection improvements. It was also noted that elected officials recognized in April that there was going to be a problem dumping all of this traffic onto Georgia Avenue, and at that time, SHA was instructed to do some brainstorming. And, SHA was surprised that GOCA had not heard about this until September. Del. Montgomery noted that neither she nor Del. Manno had heard about it before Sept. Both see problems with the interim proposal and Del. Manno is also concerned about the impact on Leisure World traffic.

While Barbara, Roy, and Arnie agreed that of the 6 options being considered, this was the best alternative; the consensus was to leave the motion standing and to write the letter to SHA. Joe Buffington noted that SHA is going to come to talk to the Chamber about the situation at the Rte. 108 entrance to the Olney Shopping Center.

NEW BUSINESS

GOCA Banner Policy – Barbara noted that the GOCA officers had been looking at the policy for putting banners on the NE corner of the Rte. 97/108 intersection. GOCA has permission from SHA to approve banners hanging on that corner. But, there has been some concern recently about for-profit groups putting up banners. So, they are looking at the policy to see if they need to add any constraints to the policy that would require that groups hanging banners be non-profit organizations. She asked anyone that had some thoughts about the policy to email their comments to her as the officers will be looking at revising the policy during January.

Following this request for comments, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Danny Benn

Danny Benn, Recording Secretary

People in attendance:

Khalid Afzal (M-NCPPC), Gina Angiola (Norbeck Hills), John Austin (Sunshine), Bob Beard (Homeland Village), Jackie & Danny Benn (Fairhill Farm), Ron Berger (Norbeck Meadows), Sunita Bhatia (OTCAC), Joe Buffington (Olney Chamber), Eileen Cahill (OTCAC), Paul Caporaletti (Graeves Auto/Appli), Steve Cohen (Oak Grove), Joe Corbett (Williamsburg Village), Bill Cottrell (Brookeville Knolls), Nancy DeLalio (OTCAC-Hallowell), Sharon Dooley (James Creek), Kathleen Donodeo (Hallowell), Dave Eskenazi (Norbeck Meadows), Barbara Falcigno (Olney Oaks), Jay Feinberg (Olney Oaks), Bobby Fletcher (Fletchers BP), Joe Fritsch (MCRAB/OTCAC), Tom Gallagher (former OTCAC member), Arnie Gordon (Norbeck Meadows), Scott Graeves (Graeves Auto/Appli), Nancy Hautt (Lake Hallowell), Terri Hogan (Gazette), Bill Jacobs (Highlands), Paul Jarosinski (Cherrywood), Jessica Jones (Bd of Elec.), Paula Kahla (Chamber/OTCAC), Dorothy Kane (OTCAC-Manor Oaks), Debi Klein (Backyard Naturalist), Rick Lamper (Graeves Auto/Appli), Walter Lee (Environ/OTCAC), Diana Littlefield (Olney Acres), Del. Roger Manno (District 19), Rich Mattson (Mattson Orthodontics), Astrid Pages (James Creek), Roy Peck (Norbeck Meadows), Keith Robinson (Brookeville Knolls), Theresa K. Robinson (Olney Oaks), Ken Roby (Bethesda Market), Karen Rollings (Olney Station developer), Ingrid Romer (Norbeck Hills), Helene Rosenheim (MCRSC), Robin Shea (Oatland Farm), Lisa Stancik (Homeland Village), Ann Stretch (Cherrywood), Alan Wandell (Olney Station developer), Ed Weisel (Norbeck Meadows), Tom Yates (Olney Beer & Fine Wine), and Matt Zaborsky (Norbeck Meadows)